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Fourth Satellite in NOAA GOES Series Successfully Launched

The fourth in a series of five advanced U.S. weather satellites was successfully launched this morning from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration announced today.

The Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite, now called NOAA GOES-L, will be renamed NOAA GOES-11 once geostationary orbit is achieved. These satellites orbit the equatorial plane of the Earth at a speed matching the Earth's rotation. This allows them to hover continuously over one position on the surface. The geostationary orbit is usually reached at about 35,800 km (22,300 miles) above the Earth, high enough to allow the satellites a full-disc view of the Earth.

"GOES satellites are vital to weather forecasting in the United States," said Gerry Dittberner, NOAA's GOES program manager. "The GOES satellites are a critical component of the ongoing National Weather Service modernization program, aiding forecasters in providing more precise and timely forecasts. With GOES-L, we are ensuring the continuity of GOES data."

The real-time weather data gathered by GOES satellites, combined with data from Doppler radars and automated surface observing systems, greatly aids weather forecasters in providing better warnings of thunderstorms, winter storms, flash floods, hurricanes, and other severe weather. These warnings help to save lives, preserve property, and benefit commercial interests.

The United States operates two meteorological satellites in geostationary orbit 22,300 miles over the equator, one over the East Coast and one over the West Coast. NOAA GOES-10, launched in 1997, is currently overlooking the West Coast out into the Pacific including Hawaii; it is located at 135 degrees west longitude. NOAA GOES-8, launched in April 1994, is overlooking the East Coast out into the Atlantic Ocean and is positioned at 75 degrees west.

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NOAA GOES-L will be stored on orbit ready for operation when needed as a replacement for GOES-8 or -10. "NOAA GOES-L will ensure continuity of GOES data from two GOES, especially for the Atlantic hurricane season," Dittberner said. The satellite will be renamed NOAA GOES-11 once reaching geostationary orbit.

The launch of GOES-L, 40 years after the launch of the first meteorological satellite by the United States, marks a milestone in international cooperation," said Professor Olu Patrick Obasi, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization." It symbolises the continued commitment of the United States to the World Meteorological Organization and in particular, its support to the Global Observing System of WMO's World Weather Watch. GOES-L will join the constellation of geostationary and polar-orbiting satellites in monitoring weather and the components of the climate system in support of disaster mitigation, research and various socio-economic development activities. GOES-L will be vitally important to all the programs and member countries of the WMO."

NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service operates the GOES series of satellites, which are acquired through NOAA's Systems Acquisition Office. After the satellites complete on-orbit checkout, NOAA assumes responsibility for command and control, data receipt, and product generation and distribution.

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center manages the design, development and launch of the spacecraft. NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida is responsible for government oversight of launch operations and countdown activities. NOAA's Systems Acquisition Office provides programmatic and acquisition guidelines to both Goddard and Kennedy. GOES-L, built by Space Systems/Loral, a subsidiary of Loral Space and Communications Ltd., was launched on an Atlas IIA rocket, built by Lockheed Martin. The on-board meteorological instruments for GOES-L include an imager and a sounder manufactured by ITT Industries Aerospace/Communications Division.

The final satellite in the current GOES series will be launched as required to support NOAA's dual-satellite geostationary observing system.

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Video file feed: A GOES-L B-roll of imagery and other materials will be broadcast during NASA TV video file feed scheduled for May 3 and May 4 at noon, 3:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. and midnight EDT. NASA TV is broadcast on GE-2, transponder 9C, C-band, located at 85 degrees west Longitude. The frequency is 3880 MHz. Polarization is vertical and audio is monaural at 6.8 MHz.

Editors' Note: GOES information and imagery are available at:
http://www.goes.noaa.gov
http://www.oso.noaa.gov/
http://goes1.gsfc.nasa.gov
http://rsd.gsfc.nasa.gov/goes/